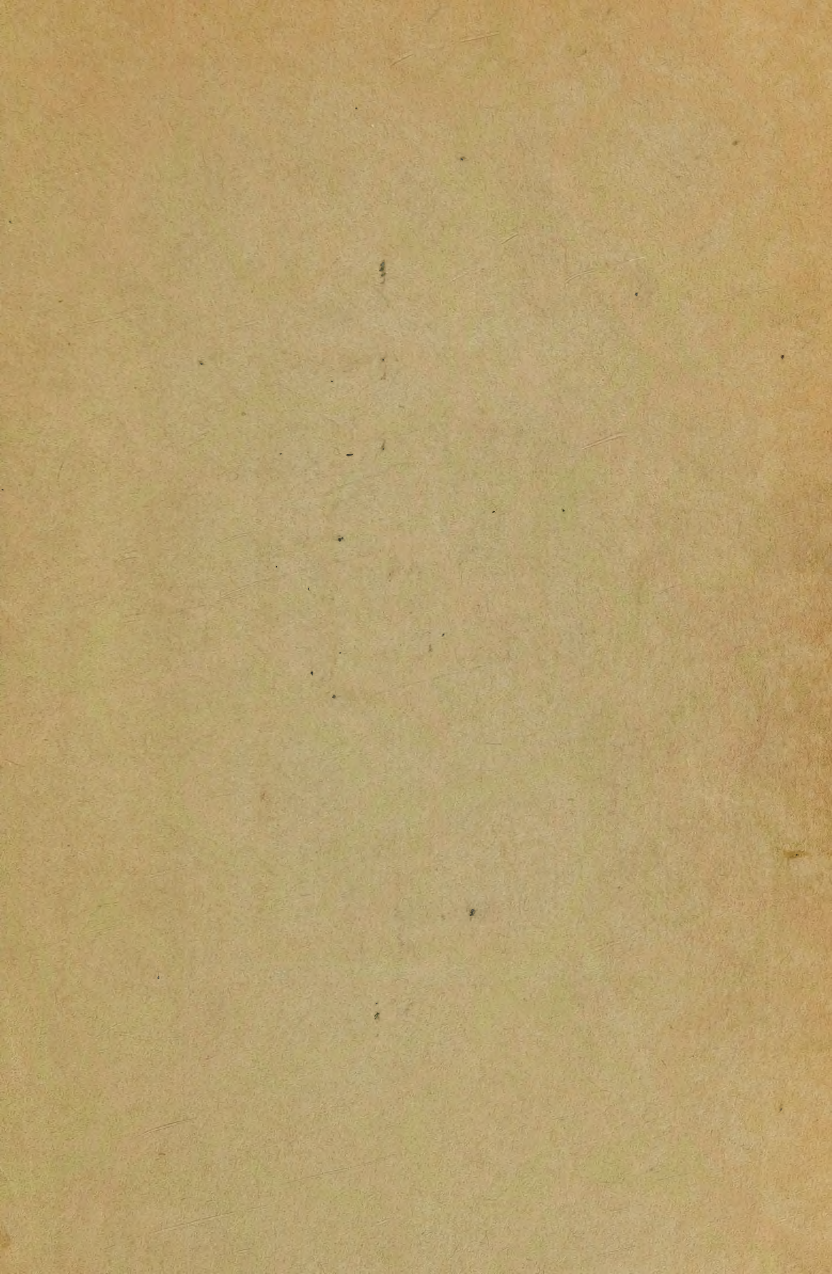


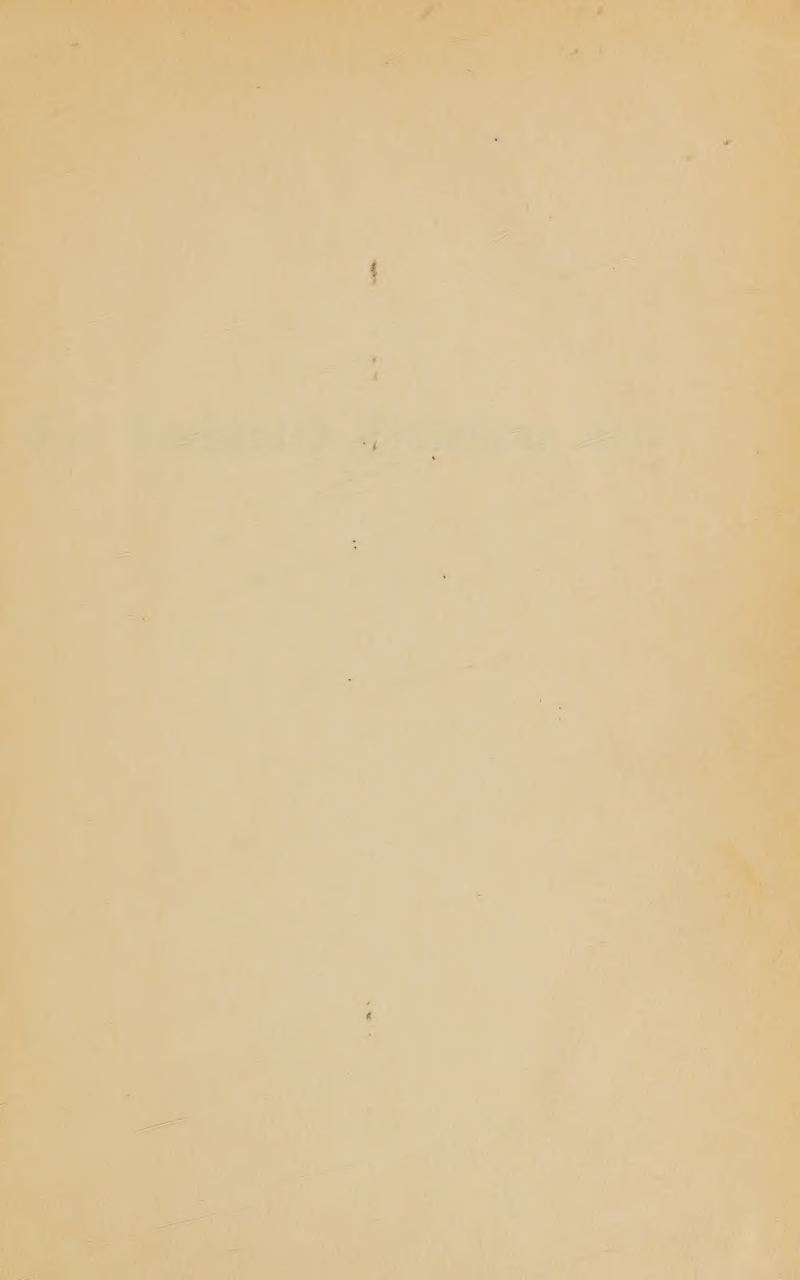
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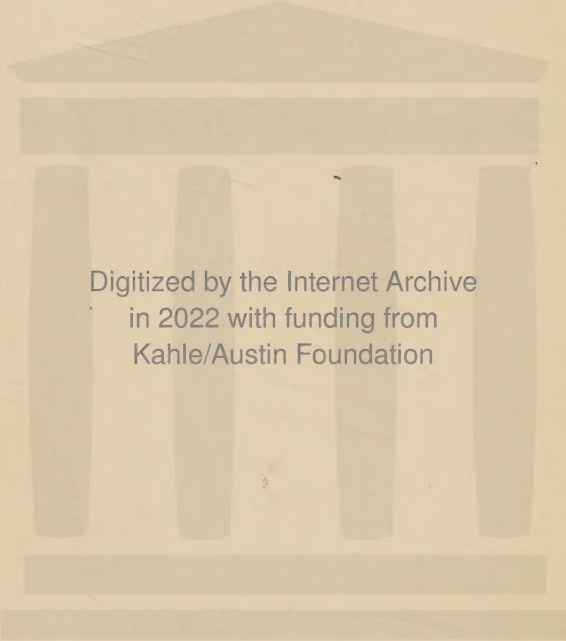








# The Enchanted Christmas Tree



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# The Enchanted Christmas Tree

A Yuletide Play

by

Percival Wilde



D. Appleton and Company  
New York :: 1925 :: London

812

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D. APPLETON AND COMPANY

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# The Enchanted Christmas Tree

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## CHARACTERS

### *Grown-Ups*

JOSIAH BENTON - 111. 2

ELLA BENTON - 6

AN EXPRESSMAN - 2-4

ANOTHER EXPRESSMAN - 1

### *Children*

FREDERICKA - 111. 2

THE JUDGE - 1

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY - 111. 2

THE SERGEANT-AT-ARMS - 111. 2

THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY - 111. 2

JURORS - 111. 2

THE FIRST WITNESS - 111. 2

THE SECOND WITNESS - 111. 2

THE THIRD WITNESS - 111. 2

SPECTATORS



# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

*It is Christmas Eve in Washington—and in New York—and in Chicago—and in Montreal—and even in far away San Francisco—so it must be Christmas Eve here in the home of JOSIAH BENTON and ELLA, his wife. But nothing in the room, which is the combined entrance hall and living room in a big, ungainly house on a rather nice street in a good-sized mid-Western city somewhere in America—shows that this Eve is one whit different from the three hundred and sixty-odd other Eves in the year. There is no holly at the windows; no wreaths are anywhere in sight; no mistletoe hangs from the chandelier; no decorations of any kind pay tribute to the approaching holiday. The room is as sober—and as somber—as it was yesterday, and as it will be to-morrow. It may be Christmas Eve elsewhere—but Christmas 'Eve itself must have stopped in fright at the sight of the fences and the*

## THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

*"No Trespassing" signs with which the BENTONS have hedged about their property. At those formidable outposts peace and good-will—joy—contentment—love of one's neighbor—hesitate and turn back.*

*The room which we see, and which has been furnished by JOSIAH, with the connivance of his wife, is a triumph of bad taste. The first thing that strikes us is that there is too much furniture in it; too many sofas; too many glass and gilt curio cabinets; too many knickknacks of one kind or another. But as we look more closely we decide that each piece, individually, is so hideous, that it would look even worse were the room partially emptied. The walls are covered with large engravings of the variety to be had cheaply of any junk dealer. They are all framed in huge, expensive frames. The French windows at the rear are made quite impossible by shades of unearthly magenta hue—and curtains of the same ghastly shade adorn the street door at the right. Bead portières deface the interior door at the left.*

*JOSIAH and ELLA miss no opportunity to assert that they are the very cream of the socially elect in the thriving city which they honor with their residence. After such a statement, their living room is quite what one would expect of them.*

## THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

*As the curtain rises, FREDERICKA, who is the BENTON'S little maid-of-all-work, is standing at the windows. Hardly more than a child, she is timid—pathetic—afraid to call her soul her own. With obvious pleasure she is listening to children, somewhere on the lawn, outside the house, who are singing a Christmas carol.*

### Chorus

Good king Wenceslas look'd out  
On the feast of Stephen  
When the snow lay round about  
Deep, and crisp, and even.  
Brightly shone the moon that night,  
Tho the frost was cruel,  
When a poor man came in sight,  
Gath'ring winter fuel.

### Tenor

"Hither, page, and stand by me,  
If thou know'st it, telling,  
Ponder peasant, who is he?  
Where and what his dwelling?"

### Treble

"Sire, he lives a good league hence,  
Underneath the mountain;  
Right against the forest fence,  
By St. Agnes' fountain."

### Tenor

"Bring me flesh, and bring me wine,  
Bring me pine-logs hither;  
Thou and I will see him dine  
When we bear them thither."

# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

## Chorus

Page and monarch forth they went,  
Forth they went together;  
Through the rude wind's wild lament  
And the bitter weather.

## Treble

"Sire, the night is darker now,  
And the wind blows stronger;  
Fails my heart, I know not how;  
I can go no longer."

## Tenor

"Mark my footsteps, my good page,  
Tread thou in them boldly:  
Thou shalt find the Winter's rage  
Freeze thy blood less coldly."

## Chorus

In his master's steps he trod  
Where the snow lay dinted;  
Heat was in the very sod  
Which the saint had printed.  
Therefore, Christian men, be sure,  
Wealth or rank possessing,  
Ye who now will bless the poor  
Shall yourselves find blessing.

*As the song nears its end, ELLA BENTON, a thin, waspish, overdressed woman in her late sixties, enters at one side. With compressed lips and overflowing disapproval she watches. The song ends.*



# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

ELLA

Fredericka!

FREDERICKA

[*Starting violently.*]

Yes, Mrs. Benton?

ELLA

[*With venomous gentleness.*]

Are the persons outside having a teet-a-teet with you?

FREDERICKA

A which, ma'am?

ELLA

That was French. Naturally, you didn't understand. Are the persons outside paying a social call on you?

FREDERICKA

On me? Good Lord, no, ma'am.

ELLA

I thought they were. If they are not, suppose you busy yourself with your duties. Find something to do—or I will find it for you.

[*She goes to the windows.*]

Go away, little boys! Go away, little girls! Go away! Don't you know this is private property? Shoo! Shoo!

[*JOSIAH BENTON enters—a wizened, undersized, mean little man, swelled up with*

## THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

*almost religious belief in his own importance.]*

JOSIAH

What is the matter? What is the matter?

ELLA

Trespassers, Josiah, dear. Nothing but trespassers.

JOSIAH

Confound their impudence!

ELLA

They were singing on our lawn! On our lawn, mind you! And without our permission!

JOSIAH

*[Proceeding toward the windows.]*

Put them off! Put them off!

ELLA

Don't excite yourself, Josiah, dear. I have done so already.

JOSIAH

*[Returning.]*

Cheek! Gall! Impertinence!

*[He stops suddenly.]*

That reminds me.

*[He turns to FREDERICKA, who, hoping she is unnoticed, has been sidling timidly toward the door.]*

Fredericka!

# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

FREDERICKA

Yes, Mr. Benton?

JOSIAH

I am expecting an express package. A large express package.

FREDERICKA

Yes, sir.

JOSIAH

When it comes, bring it right in here.

FREDERICKA

Yes, sir.

JOSIAH

Into this room.

ELLA

*[Overlooking no opportunity to put in an oar.]*

Do you understand what you are to do? Mr. Benton is expecting an express package—a large package. You are to bring it into this room—here—at once—immediately.

FREDERICKA

Yes, ma'am. Yes, sir.

ELLA

Servants are so stupid!

*[She turns on FREDERICKA.]*

Why are you standing there like a stick? Go! Go!

# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

FREDERICKA

Yes, Mrs. Benton.

*[She goes hurriedly.]*

ELLA

An express package coming? What is it, Josiah, dear?

JOSIAH

*[Rubbing his hands happily.]*

Something I ordered when I was downtown last week. Guess what it is.

ELLA

I'm sure I haven't the slightest idea.

JOSIAH

*[As if he were saying, "A present for you, my dear."]*

Some more "No Trespassing" signs!

ELLA

*[Pleased.]*

Yes?

JOSIAH

*[Nodding.]*

Fact! Six of them! Each six feet long! When I was downtown they showed me samples of a new kind—painted with extra large letters—black and gold—guaranteed to last ten years. They're shipping



## THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

them from the factory. They promised they'd be here to-night.

ELLA

Won't that be lovely!

JOSIAH

We have needed something of the kind for a long time. It's all nonsense that a five-year-old child can't read plain English. "No Trespassing"—that isn't hard to understand. It isn't hard to spell. ~~And the letters on the new signs will be so big that it won't be hard to read.~~

ELLA

Quite right, Josiah, dear.

JOSIAH

*[Seating himself.]*

I have made up my mind that children are a necessary evil.

ELLA

Children should be seen and not heard.

JOSIAH

Children shouldn't be seen! They should be hidden away out of sight. They should be kept in pens until they are eighteen years old. They should be exercised at night—on leashes—and they should be muzzled.

ELLA

I have always thought so, Josiah, dear.

## THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

JOSIAH

Instead of that they allow them to play in the park! They allow them to run, and laugh, and shout where we can see them from our windows, and where they annoy Us!

*[He pauses.]*

Why must children play? I never want to play. Do you?

ELLA

Never, Josiah, dear.

JOSIAH

It should be stopped. If children do play, let them play somewhere out of our sight and hearing.

ELLA

*[After a pause.]*

I saw some of them sledding down our hill this afternoon.

JOSIAH

Ah, ha?

ELLA

They say we have the best hill in town.

JOSIAH

Of course we have. Everything we have is the best. What did you do?

ELLA

I ordered them off—and I told them if they did it again, I would have them arrested.

# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

JOSIAH

[*Nodding ominously.*]

They were beginning to be lawbreakers early.

ELLA

Just fancy: not one of them was over ten!

JOSIAH

The very worst age!

[*He reconsiders.*]

Though I don't know—all ages are bad. I hope you were firm.

ELLA

I didn't mince matters. I laid down the law to them. Trust me!

[*She pauses.*]

If they had been mine, what I would have done to them!

JOSIAH

Fortunately, Ella, we have never had any children.

ELLA

Fortunately.

JOSIAH

[*With heat.*]

Do you know, this afternoon, when I was out walking, a man had the presumption to stop me, and push

## THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

his business-card into my hand. I think I have it in my pocket.

[*He searches; fails to find it.*]

Funny: I know I put it here.

ELLA

What did he want?

JOSIAH

He represented some company—I don't remember the name—but they make a business of supplying ready-trimmed Christmas trees.

ELLA

Christmas trees! Fancy that!

JOSIAH

He wanted to sell me one—to sell *me*! As soon as I understood what he was about I said with dignity, "My man, clear out! Clear out! What do I want of a Christmas tree?" He said, "Maybe your children would like it." I said, "My children? Humph! I wouldn't have children!" Then I walked on—with dignity.

ELLA

What was he like—this man?

JOSIAH

He was just a person—just a person—nobody *we* would know. I didn't have to look at him closely



## THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

to see that. I did turn around to frown at him after I had walked on a few steps, and he had vanished. He had disappeared. He was gone. Probably he had sneaked into some side street; I suppose he had gone into some house to try and sell Christmas trees to the neighbors. But it gave me quite a start: his popping out of sight so suddenly.

*[He snorts; pauses; searches his pockets again.]*

Funny I can't find that card. I never misplace anything.

*[Children's voices sing outside.]*

God rest you merry, gentlemen;  
Let nothing you dismay;  
Remember Christ, our Savior,  
Was born on Christmas day,  
To save us all from Satan's pow'r  
When we were gone astray.

☉ tidings of comfort and joy,  
Comfort and joy,  
☉ tidings of comfort and joy . . . .

JOSIAH

*[With consternation.]*

Trespassers! Again!

ELLA

Again!

# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

JOSIAH

[*Rising energetically.*]

This must be stopped!

ELLA



Outrageous! Simply outrageous! Because it's Christmas Eve may we have no privacy at all?

JOSIAH

I wish the "No Trespassing" signs had come. I'd put them out right now; and I'd paint them with luminous paint so that they could read them in the dark!

[*He goes to the French windows.*]

Come with me. This time *I* shall speak to them—I myself!

ELLA

Don't excite yourself, Josiah, dear.

JOSIAH

Come with me!

[*The two go out at the windows. The carolers, who have continued into the second stanza, sing only a minute longer. Then they stop abruptly in the middle of a line. A bell rings. FREDERICKA enters timidly from the left; is relieved to find the room empty. She crosses it and opens the door at the right.*]

# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

AN EXPRESSMAN

*[Very big, very gruff, with a hoarse voice  
that seems to come from some deeply, sub-  
terranean cavern.]*

This nummer Golla-walla Murra-wurra Street?

FREDERICKA

*[Uncertainly.]*

Yes; I guess so.

THE EXPRESSMAN

*[Deciphering a name in his receipt-book.]*

This where Mister Brumma-Wumma lives?

FREDERICKA

Yes.

THE EXPRESSMAN

Sign here!

*[He thrusts his book at her violently.]*

Where yuh wanna put?

FREDERICKA

What?

THE EXPRESSMAN

'S package. Where yuh wan' 's package?

FREDERICKA

In here, please. Right in this room.

# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

THE EXPRESSMAN

*[In a thunderous voice to some person outside.]*

Bring 'er in here, Mike! In here!

*[A second EXPRESSMAN helps him to carry in a huge box which they place between the windows.]*

'S where yuh wan' it?

FREDERICKA

Yes; I guess so.

THE EXPRESSMAN

Tha's right. Stan' 'er up on end. Tha's right.

*[He goes to FREDERICKA.]*

Yuh signed? Gimme the book.

*[He takes it.]*

Come on, Mike.

*[MIKE precedes him out. THE EXPRESSMAN stops at the door; speaks in a thunderous voice.]*

Murry Christmas!

FREDERICKA

Shh!

THE EXPRESSMAN

Wha's the matter?

FREDERICKA

Mister and missis is coming. Go away! They ain't in good humor.

# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

THE EXPRESSMAN

Go away? Sure. Glad to oblige!

*[Somewhere near his feet there is a flash and a puff of smoke—no report. When the cloud dies away THE EXPRESSMAN has vanished.]*

FREDERICKA

*[Very much startled.]*

Land's sake!

*[The BENTONS enter.]*

ELLA

*[Sternly.]*

Fredericka!

FREDERICKA

Yes, Mrs. Benton?

ELLA

Have you been smoking?

FREDERICKA

*[Eagerly.]*

No, ma'am. It wasn't me. It was the expressman—him who brought the package. He stood in the doorway, right there, and he says "Merry Christmas," just like that, an' I says to him, I says——

ELLA :

*[Interrupting.]*

I am not interested in what you "says" to him, Fred-

## THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

ericka, nor am I interested in what he "says" to you.  
"Says!" Fancy that! How vulgar! You may go.

FREDERICKA

[*Earnestly.*]

Mrs. Benton, there was something queer about that man——

ELLA

[*Interrupting again.*]

I said you might go.

FREDERICKA

[*Crestfallen.*]

Yes'm.

[*She goes.*]

JOSIAH

[*Closing the French windows* ]

I stopped them. I stopped their singing in short order. The idea of it—singing—on my lawn—singing!

[*He notices the box.*]

Ah! the express package!

ELLA

The "No Trespassing" signs.

JOSIAH

Delivered right on time.

[*He proceeds to the box. It turns out to be  
a most conveniently built affair, for when*



## THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

JOSIAH *presses back a hook or two the top lifts off in one piece. Inside is a splendidly trimmed Christmas tree. JOSIAH gasps.*]

ELLA <sup>1</sup>

It isn't the signs.

JOSIAH

No—it isn't.

ELLA

It seems to be—it seems to be a Christmas tree.

JOSIAH

That's what it is—a Christmas tree.

ELLA

That fool of an expressman must have made a mistake.

JOSIAH

It wasn't meant for us.

ELLA

[*Ringing a bell.*]

No; most decidedly not. Don't excite yourself, Josiah, dear. I'll dispose of it quickly enough.

[*FREDERICKA enters.*]

Fredericka, take that tree down into the cellar and chop it up into firewood.

# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

FREDERICKA

[*Protesting.*]

Oh, ma'am!

ELLA

Chop it up! Right away!

FREDERICKA

It's such a pretty tree! If you don't want it, somebody'd like to have it! I'd like to have it for myself.

JOSIAH

You heard what Mrs. Benton said.

FREDERICKA

Yes, sir.

JOSIAH

Follow your orders!

[*Thoroughly cowed, FREDERICKA proceeds to the tree—and with the idea, perhaps, of sparing it a few minutes longer, takes the top to the side of the room, near the door, first. She turns appealingly to MRS. BENTON.*]

FREDERICKA

Ma'am!

ELLA

Firewood!

[*Shaking her head sadly, FREDERICKA goes to the tree and seizes its trunk. The lights*

# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

*in the room quiver perceptibly. FREDERICKA starts and screams.]*

ELLA

*[Impatiently.]*

Well?

FREDERICKA

*[Touches the tree again. As before, the lights quiver. Again FREDERICKA screams.]*

Mrs. Benton, there's something funny about that tree!

ELLA

*[Scornfully.]*

Something funny?

FREDERICKA

Yes'm! Like there was about that expressman—the one that brought it, I mean. I touched the tree—you seen me do it—and something funny happened.

JOSIAH

*[Incredulously.]*

What do you mean?

FREDERICKA

It wasn't a shock—no, m'm—no, sir. It wasn't a 'lectric shock. But it was something funny; I felt it in my fingers.

ELLA

How absurd! How utterly ridiculous! Are you going to do as you were told?

# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

FREDERICKA

[*Resolutely.*]

No, ma'am. I ain't agoing to touch that tree again. I'm scared.

ELLA

[*To JOSIAH.*]

The quaint superstitions of the lower classes!

[*She turns to the tree.*]

I'm not afraid. Watch me.

[*She grasps the tree. The lights dim nearly out. ELLA removes her hand hastily. The lights rise again.*]

Josiah, dear—Josiah, dear—there is something unusual!

JOSIAH

Nonsense!

[*But JOSIAH must be wrong, for as he lays hand on the tree the lights go out completely. They are out for only an instant; then they relight again. But a change has taken place, for the room, as we saw it in the beginning, was illuminated by a cold, unfriendly light, while it is now suffused with a warm, reddish glow. JOSIAH and ELLA look at each other in astonishment.*]

FREDERICKA

[*Triumphantly.*]

I said there was something funny!

# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

## A CHILD

*[Appearing from behind one of the sofas.]*

Hello!

*[The child places a sign lettered "NO TRESPASSING" in the center of the room.]*

## A SECOND CHILD

*[Popping up from behind another sofa.]*

Hello!

*[The child places a sign lettered "KEEP OFF" on the sofa.]*

## A THIRD CHILD

*[Entering through the French windows.]*

Hello!

*[The child hangs a sign lettered "NO ADMITTANCE" on the windows.]*

## A FOURTH CHILD

*[Entering at the inner door.]*

Hello!

*[The child hangs a sign lettered "NO THOROUGHFARE" on the door.]*

FIFTH, SIXTH, SEVENTH, AND EIGHTH CHILDREN

*[Appearing from behind curio cabinets, swarming in through doors and windows.]*

Hello! Hello! Hello! Hello!

*[They place signs lettered "PRIVATE PROPERTY," "KEEP OFF THE GRASS," "NO*

## THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

PARKING," and "DO NOT LOITER" on the furniture.]

### MORE CHILDREN

[*Emerging from half a dozen different places at a time.*]

Hello! Hello! Hello! Hello! Hello! Hello!

[*To the collection they add signs lettered "KEEP OFF THE EARTH," "STRICTLY PRIVATE," "MOVE ON," "TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED," "KEEP OUT," "DON'T!"*]

### JOSIAH

[*In consternation.*]

Trespa—

[*Somehow he cannot finish the word.*]

Tresp— Tres— Tr— Tr—

[*Something must be the matter, for his voice fails him.*]

### ELLA

You—who are you?

### THE OLDEST BOY

We—all of us—are the child you might have had.

### A CHILD

It might have been a boy—like me!

### ANOTHER

It might have been a girl—like me!



# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

ANOTHER

It might have had golden hair—like me!

ANOTHER

Or it might have been dark—like me!

ANOTHER

It might have been tall—like me!

ANOTHER

Or short—like me!

ANOTHER

Or plump—like me!

ANOTHER

Or slender—like me!

ANOTHER

It might have been pretty—like me!

ANOTHER

Or it might have been just cute—like me!

A GIRL

But we are all in the never-never land—waiting—  
waiting! And now we know that we shall wait  
forever!

THE OLDEST BOY

*[Seating himself at a table, rapping upon it  
with a gavel.]*

Order in the court room!

# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

[*He puts on a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles.*]

The Jury will take their seats.

[*There is a rush. A single large sofa suffices for the JURY, for one row of six sits upon the seat, while the second row of six perches itself airily upon the back. It is a little crowded, to be sure, but the JURY seems to like it.*]

Prisoners into the dock!

JOSIAH

I protest! I protest!

THE JUDGE

Sergeant-at-Arms!

THE SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

[*A very small person with a very large club.*]

Did you hear what the Judge said? Follow your orders!

[*He prods JOSIAH and ELLA with his club. They move toward the dock. They seem to know that the top of the box in which the Christmas tree came, and which is now standing on its head, ready to receive them, is meant for this purpose. But they disregard the "NO TRESPASSING" sign which is in their way, and the SERGEANT-AT-ARMS jerks them back angrily.*]

## THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

Hey! Can't you read plain English? "No Trespassing"—that isn't hard to understand. This way!

*[Dodging around various signs, he leads them into the dock.]*

All ready, your Honor.

### THE JUDGE

Prisoners at the bar, have you an attorney? If not, the court will assign counsel to defend you.

### JOSIAH AND ELLA

Ridiculous! Preposterous! Outrageous! Impossible! Unheard of!

### THE SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

*[Rapping the dock with his club.]*

Silence!

*[He turns to THE JUDGE.]*

Your Honor, they have no lawyer.

### THE JUDGE

*[To FREDERICKA.]*

Counselor, will you defend these—ahem!—persons?

### ELLA

*[Indignant.]*

Persons! Persons! Us!

### THE SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

Silence!

### THE JUDGE

Counselor?

# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

FREDERICKA

Meaning me, your Honor?

THE JUDGE

You, Counselor.

FREDERICKA

"Counselor"—ain't that fine! Sure, your Honor; I'll do my best.

THE JUDGE

Thank you. The District Attorney will read the charges.

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

*[Rising; ruffling his hair dramatically; clearing his throat.]*

Ahem! Ahem!

A JURYGIRL

*[In the second row, prodding another in the first row with her foot.]*

He said "Ahem." That's serious.

THE SECOND JURYGIRL

Very.

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Your Honor—ladies and gentlemen of the Jury—and—

*[Looking at the prisoners.]*

persons——

*[Disorder in the dock.]*

# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

THE SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

Order! Order!

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

I shall now read the charges.

*[He takes up a sheet of paper, and reads from it slowly and impressively.]*

Whereas, nevertheless, if, therefore, howsoever, whatsoever, wheresoever, whysoever, and—

*[A grand crescendo.]*

to wit!

THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY

*[Horrified.]*

To wit?

A JUROR

*[Nodding.]*

To wit!

THE JUDGE

Did the learned District Attorney say “to wit”?

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Yes, your Honor. To wit.

THE JUDGE

Tst! Tst! That’s too bad! I wouldn’t have believed it of them. Proceed.

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Being duly sworn, saith and deposes, notwithstanding, unless, altho——

# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

## THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY

[*Rising.*]

Your Honor, the Jury is anxious to dispose of this case. I move that the reading of the charges be dispensed with.

## A JUROR

Second the motion.

## THE JUDGE

Moved and seconded that the reading of the charges be dispensed with. All in favor say "Aye."

[*There is a chorus of "Ayes."*]

Those opposed say "No."

[*The BENTONS vote "No."*]

The motion is carried unanimously. Prisoners, you have heard the charges. How do you plead? Guilty or not guilty?

## FREDERICKA

[*After consulting with her clients.*]

Not guilty, in the second degree, your Honor.

## THE JUDGE

Not guilty—in the second degree.

[*He turns to the JURY as if offering them refreshments.*]

Jury, would you now like to hear some evidence?



# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

## THE JURY

[*With enthusiasm.*]

Evidence! That's what we want! Evidence! Bring on the evidence!

## THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

[*Shouting.*]

First witness! First witness!

[*There enters a ragged, timid little boy, dragging a sled. He dodges the numerous signs carefully.*]

Take the stand.

[*The stand is an ordinary chair.*]

Address the Jury when you speak, and talk loudly. You may tell your story.

## THE FIRST WITNESS

[*Hesitantly.*]

I was sledding down their hill this morning. It's the best hill in town, you know.

## THE JURY

[*Vociferously.*]

Yes! That's so! Yes! He knows what he's talking about!

## THE FIRST WITNESS

I had only been down a couple of times—not more than two or three times at the most—when she came out of the house——

# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

[*Interrupting.*]

Who do you mean by "she"?

THE FIRST WITNESS

[*Pointing.*]

Her.

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Say "this person."

[*Disorder in the dock, subdued by the SER-  
GEANT-AT-ARMS.*]

THE FIRST WITNESS

I had only been down a couple of times when this person came out and ordered me off. An' I wasn't hurting her old lawn any! Why, there's a foot of snow and ice on top of it!

[*The JURY agrees loudly as before.*]

This person came out and said she'd have me arrested if I didn't stop.

[*From the jury box there are cries of  
"Shame!" "Oh, shame!"*]

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Does the learned counsel for the defense wish to cross-examine?

# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

FREDERICKA

*[Who has been much affected by the little boy's story.]*

No, sir; not me.

THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY

*[Rising.]*

Your Honor, the Jury would like to ask a question.

THE JUDGE

Proceed.

THE FOREMAN

*[To the Witness.]*

When you were sledding down the hill, were you going down head first or were you going down feet first?

THE WITNESS

I was doing belly-bumpers.

THE FOREMAN

*[Nodding approval.]*

That's the best way.

*[He seats himself.]*

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Second witness! Second witness!

*[The FIRST WITNESS leaves the stand, taking a seat in the section reserved for spec-*

## THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

*tators as the SECOND WITNESS, a girl, enters.]*

Take the stand. Speak loudly. Address the Jurors—not me.

THE SECOND WITNESS

*[Tearfully.]*

We were singing carols—about a dozen of us, on the lawn in front of their house only a few minutes ago. I knew—I knew they didn't like children, but I hoped that on this Eve—Christmas Eve—they might be different.

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

What happened?

THE SECOND WITNESS

He came out——

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Say “this person.”

THE SECOND WITNESS

This person came out, and called us trespassers, and told us to get off or he'd throw us off.

*[Indignation in the jury box.]*

Those were his very words! I didn't expect that. I thought the carols would touch his heart——

FREDERICKA

Your Honor, I object.

# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

## THE JUDGE

Objection sustained. The witness is cautioned not to refer to the prisoner's heart unless it is proved that the prisoner has a heart. Proceed.

## THE SECOND WITNESS

That's all. He ordered us off. He's done that lots of times. He's done it to you—and you—and you—

*[She indicates jurors.]*

and he's done it to you!

*[She indicates the JUDGE.]*

Do you remember that time you stubbed your toe, and you wanted to sit on his lawn until it stopped hurting? He wouldn't let you do it.

## THE JUDGE

That's so.

## THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

*[To FREDERICKA.]*

Do you wish to cross-examine?

## FREDERICKA

No, sir.

## THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Third witness! Third witness!

*[A nine-year-old boy in baseball uniform limps in. Under one arm he has a crutch; in the hollow of the other he is carrying a*

## THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

*most diminutive and most disreputable mongrel puppy. The SERGEANT-AT-ARMS helps him to the stand.]*

### THE THIRD WITNESS

[*To the dog.*]

Quiet, Prince! Quiet!

### THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Address the Jury. Speak loudly. Tell your story in your own words.

### THE THIRD WITNESS

Well, fellows, you all know how I broke my leg.

[*There are murmurs of sympathy from the JURY.*]

I did it sliding for the home plate when there was two out an' the score tied in the ninth inning; an' I brought in the winning run, too.

### THE JURY

Good boy! I saw him do it! Regular streak of lightning!

### THE THIRD WITNESS

I slid—an' I felt something snap—golly, but it hurt! —an' then, nex' thing you know, I was on my back in a bed with a weight tied on to my foot. An' for three months, while the other fellows was playing baseball, an' going swimming, an' having good times

## THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

'most every afternoon, I was in the hospital—just laying there, an' looking out of the winder, an' counting the hours, an' waiting for my leg to get well again. Gee, I thought it would never get well—an' I know that's what the doctors thought, too. Then, by and by, they let me sit up a little, an' one day they said I could go out in the park. I couldn't walk, so they put me in a wheel-chair—me an' Prince—an' they rolled me out where I could watch the fellows play. Gee, that was great!

### THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Go on.

### THE THIRD WITNESS

I couldn't play with 'em. I couldn't stand—I didn't have the strength to stand. There was only one thing I could do, an' I was so happy I did it—an' Prince, he did it, too: I hollered, I hollered just as loud as I could, an' Prince, he barked his best. I had to watch the other fellows—I couldn't make a move—but I could make just as much noise as anybody, an' you bet I did! You know, you c'n have a lot of fun just making a noise. Well, I yelled, an' Prince barked—he's got a good big bark for a dog his size—an' then—an' then——

### THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

When then?



# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

## THE THIRD WITNESS

[*Indicating the BENTONS.*]

They come out from where they lived right into the park where I was sitting, an' they says :

[*He imitates an acid voice.*]

"Little boy, you're breaking the law." Me breaking the law in a wheel-chair, with a bum leg in a plaster cast! An' he says, "Disorderly conduct—common nuisance—little ruffian—he ought to be arrested for it," and she says, pointing at Prince, mind you, pointing at Prince, "That noisy cur should be sent to the pound." An' there was a look in their eyes that said plainer than anything else they was saying that they'd like to send both of us to the pound!

[*He pauses.*]

Well, I wouldn't mind going to the pound so much; it ain't much fun going 'round with a bum leg an' this thing under your arm when you're a athalete like me. But to send Prince to the pound when he's the best pal I've got in the world; I don't see how anybody could be mean enough to think of that.

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

[*To FREDERICKA.*]

The witness is yours.

# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

FREDERICKA

*[Weeping.]*

I don't want to ask him nothing, but

*[And she lowers her voice confidentially.]*

if he'll come around to the back door some time I'll give him a bit of meat for the dog.

THE THIRD WITNESS

Thanks. That'll be fine. Prince here's got an appetite like a Sain' Bernard.

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

And now—my last witness.

*[He turns to FREDERICKA.]*

Will you please take the stand?

FREDERICKA

Who? Me?

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

If you please.

FREDERICKA

*[Appealing to the JUDGE.]*

Your Honor, I'm the counselor for the defense.

THE JUDGE

The District Attorney has the right to call you as a witness. Take the stand.

*[Much afraid, FREDERICKA does so.]*

# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Counselor, what do you know about this Christmas tree?

FREDERICKA

The tree? I know there's something funny about it.

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

*[Laughing.]*

You don't have to tell us that! We know that already.

*[And, indeed, JUDGE, JURY, court room—  
excepting the BENTONS—are laughing  
heartily.]*

FREDERICKA

Well, what else do you want to know?

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

When did you first see the tree?

FREDERICKA

*[With sad memories.]*

Oh, your Honor!

*[She appeals to the JUDGE.]*

THE JUDGE

Answer the question.

FREDERICKA

Well, it come this evening. It was in that big box the expressman brought.

# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

[*As she stops.*]

Yes?

FREDERICKA

[*Confidentially.*]

Say, did you know there was something funny about that expressman, too?

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Of course! Of course!

[*Again, JUDGE, JURY, and spectators join in laughter.*]

FREDERICKA

[*A wee bit resentful at being left out of the secret.*]

Well, I'm glad if *you* knew it, because I didn't know nothing until I asked him to go away, an' then he give me quite a turn, he did, he did.

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

After you saw the Christmas tree—when the box was open—what happened?

FREDERICKA

Oh, do I have to answer that?

THE JUDGE

The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

FREDERICKA

*[Reluctantly.]*

Missis rang for me, an' when I came

*[She bows her head and speaks tearfully.]*

she told me to take the tree down in the cellar—an'  
—an' chop it up for firewood.

*[JUDGE, JURY, and spectators are too much  
shocked to do more than gasp in dismay.  
Even the BENTONS hang their heads.]*

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

*[Very quietly.]*

That is all.

*[Weeping, FREDERICKA leaves the stand.]*

THE JUDGE

*[To FREDERICKA.]*

Counselor, do you wish to call any witness for the  
defense?

FREDERICKA

No, sir—your Honor.

THE JUDGE

*[Quietly.]*

I shall now charge the Jury.

*[He speaks slowly and impressively.]*

Jury, you have heard the evidence. It is for you to  
weigh it—to sift it—to pass upon it. It is for you  
to say whether the prisoners are guilty as charged,

## THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

or whether they are not guilty. Treat them with fairness. Let no prejudices influence you. Decide their case upon its merits and with even-handed justice. If there is a doubt, give them the benefit of it; but if there is no doubt, do as your consciences command you. It is in your power to set them at liberty: to permit them to leave this court room free persons; and it is in your power to find them guilty—a verdict which carries with it, I need hardly remind you, the sentence that they be abolished.

### THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY

*[Rising.]*

Your Honor, the Jury has already reached a verdict.

*[He pauses.]*

Guilty as charged.

*[The BENTONS have ceased to be aggressive.  
They hang their heads.]*

### THE JUDGE

Is that the verdict of all of you?

*[One by one, the JURORS nod solemnly.]*

Executioner!

*[There enters our old friend the EXPRESS-  
MAN, masked, and bearing a huge ax.]*

### THE EXPRESSMAN

Ready, your Honor.

# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

THE JUDGE

I shall now pronounce sentence.

[*The SERGEANT-AT-ARMS prods the BENTONS; escorts them to the JUDGE. The JUDGE puts on a black cap.*]

Prisoners at the bar, is there any reason why sentence shall not be passed upon you?

FREDERICKA

Yes, your Honor.

THE JUDGE

Counselor?

FREDERICKA

Judge, your Honor, give 'em a chance! Oh, give 'em a chance! It ain't that they don't mean well: they're doin' their best, accordin' to their lights. It's just that they don't know no better! That's all. You see, they ain't never been brought up right. They ain't never had nobody to make a fuss about 'em, an' care for 'em, an' love 'em. They ain't never had a child in the house. They ain't never, never been real children themselves.

[*She pauses.*]

They think that when you get to be twenty or thirty or forty you're brought up, an' that's all there's to it.

[*She turns to the BENTONS.*]

Ain't that so?

[*The BENTONS nod with humility.*]

## THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

They're wrong! They're wrong, an' they don't know they're wrong! Brought up at twenty or thirty or forty? Why, that's only when the real bringing up begins—when you really begin to learn.

*[The scene begins to darken.]*

You learn that it ain't the fun you get out of life yourself that counts; you learn that it ain't that that makes for real happiness. It's the fun you see the other fellow getting that matters! Most of all, it's the fun you see the children getting.

*[The scene is now quite dark.]*

Judge, your Honor, don't be hard on 'em! Everything's been wrong with 'em from the start. Just think of it: never, never to have a child! You see, they couldn't have children—they didn't love children enough, an' children don't never come to folks that don't love children! That would have made all the difference in the world: to them—to us—to everybody! That's what's been the matter from the beginning: they've been unhappy, an' they don't know it. Let 'em put up their foolish old signs. Let 'em amuse themselves their own way. It's their fun, because they don't know there's better kinds of fun. It's their fun, so let 'em have it! Judge, your Honor, have a heart!

ELLA

*[In the darkness.]*

Firewood!



# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

FREDERICKA

Have a heart!

ELLA

Firewood!

*[The lights flash on—the same lighting we saw in the beginning. The children have disappeared. The forest of signs about the room has disappeared. The Christmas tree, too, has disappeared—and in its place is a neat bundle of boards, each a foot wide and five feet high. The board nearest us, we notice, is lettered from top to bottom: “NO TRESPASSING.”]*

ELLA

*[Indicating the boards.]*

Take them into the cellar, and chop them up into firewood!

*[It's pretty clear that some one has been dreaming: FREDERICKA, or JOSIAH, or ELLA, or perhaps all three. And if you ask us, it's our personal opinion that the dream started just about the time that that very gruff EXPRESSMAN vanished in a puff of smoke. But we're not sure.]*

ELLA

*[For the fourth time.]*

Firewood! Chop them up into firewood!

# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

FREDERICKA

[*With a shrill cry of delight.*]

Ah, that I will, ma'am! That I will!

[*She hurries to the package of "No Trespassing" signs.*]

JOSIAH

Ella!

ELLA

[*In an outburst which has been coming for years.*]

I think they're the most hideous things I've seen. I won't have them on the place. And let me tell you something more: I don't like signs—any signs—anywhere! And I don't hate children! And I know what I've been saying all these years, and I've been saying it because I thought it would please you, so there!

JOSIAH

[*Monstrously surprised*]

Because you thought it would please me?

ELLA

[*Almost weeping.*]

Yes, Josiah.

JOSIAH

Well, why do you think I've been doing those things? It's because I thought it would please you!

[*He puts his arm about ELLA'S shoulders, and turns to the paralyzed FREDERICKA.*]

## THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

Fredericka, Mrs. Benton and I have been a couple of old fools!

FREDERICKA

[*Radiant.*]

Yes, sir; yes, ma'am. I mean no, sir——

[*A song is heard outside.*]

○ little town of Bethlehem!  
How still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
The silent stars go by;  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth  
The everlasting Light;  
The hopes and fears of all the years  
Are met in thee to-night.

ELLA

[*Defiantly.*]

Now, I think that's beautiful!

JOSIAH

[*With equal defiance.*]

So do I!

[*The song.*]

For Christ is born of Mary,  
And, gathered all above,  
While mortals sleep, the angels keep  
Their watch of wondering love.  
○ morning stars, together  
Proclaim the holy birth!  
And praises sing to God the King,  
And peace to men on earth.

# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

JOSIAH

It's cold outside. Do you think we might invite them in?

ELLA

Yes, oh, yes! Josiah, dear.

*[Arm in arm, the two old people go out through the French windows. FREDERICKA, smiling happily, is left in the center of the room.]*

*[The song.]*

How silently, how silently,  
The wondrous gift is given!  
So God imparts to human hearts  
The blessings of His heaven.  
No ear may hear His coming,  
But in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive Him still,  
The dear Christ enters in.

*[FREDERICKA takes the bundle of signs, and moves slowly toward the inner door. The carolers appear at the windows.]*

O holy Child of Bethlehem!  
Descend to us, we pray;  
Cast out our sin, and enter in,  
Be born in us to-day.  
We hear the Christmas angels  
The great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us, abide with us,  
Our Lord Emmanuel!

THE CURTAIN FALLS

# THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

## TO PRODUCERS

The exit of the Expressman, as described in the play, may perplex producers: "Somewhere near his feet there is a flash and a puff of smoke—no report. When the cloud dies away the Expressman has vanished."

If the resources of the theatre do not permit of this effect, it will be entirely satisfactory for the Expressman, who is an adult, to enter smoking a cigar or cigarette, which he continues to smoke during his brief scene. When he is asked to go away by Fredericka, he may deliver the exit line, blow a cloud of smoke, and turn a handspring off the stage through the open door. All that is required is the smoke and a startling exit.

The dark scene, during which the children disappear, must be rehearsed with the greatest of care. The older children should be told off to remove the signs, assigning one or two to each, and making sure that none will be left behind. Instead of attempting to stack the signs into "a neat bundle of boards," which, in the dark, will take time and may cause confusion, the signs should be removed altogether, and a bundle of boards, previously prepared, and lettered as described, should be substituted for the Christmas tree by the stage hands.

The author is aware that the Bentons, as pictured

## THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS TREE

in the charming illustrations, are children dressed in the garments of older persons. He suggests, nevertheless, that these rôles are likely to be far more effective if played by adults. Contrast is important in any play, and it is produced in "The Enchanted Christmas Tree" by opposing the large group of children with a smaller group of grown-ups.

The three carols are traditional, and their music may be obtained from any music dealer. For the last, the carol music and not the music of the well-known recessional hymn should be employed.

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